The great Duty of Miniſters, *to take heed to* themſelves *and their* Doctrine.

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A

SERMON

Preach'd in a new Townſhip, *Narraganſett*, No. 2.

October 20. 1742.

When a Church was gathered there, and the Rev.

Mr. *Eliſha Marſh*

Ordained the Paſtor of it.

By *William Cooke*, A. M.

Paſtor of a Church in *Sudbury*.

Publiſh'd at the general Deſire of the Hearers.

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2 Cor. II. xvii. *For we are not as many, which corrupt the Word of* God: *But as of Sincerity, but as of* God, *in the Sight of* God *ſpeak we in* Christ.

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THE

Great Duty of MINISTERS,

To take Heed to

Themſelves and *Doctrine.*

1 TIM. IV. XVI.

Take heed unto thy ſelf and unto thy Doctrine; —— for in doing this, thou ſhalt both ſave thyſelf and them that hear thee.

THE Words now read to you, are a ſolemn Charge given by the great *Apoſtle* to his Son *Timothy*: And they give us the Sum and Subſtance of the Duty of every ſucceeding Miniſter of the Goſpel; and that, whether we conſider him in a *private* or *publick* Character, as a *private Chriſtian* or inveſted with the *ſacred Office*. They ſuggeſt to us the great Hazzard he is in of neglecting his Duty under this *two-fold Character*, and contain a moſt weighty and

and comprehenſive Argument to perſwade him to Fidelity and good Conſcience in the Diſcharge of it: And happy the Miniſter who is ſo influenced by the Weight of the Argument, as to keep the Charge, notwithſtanding the Difficulties which attend it! And happy the People who have ſuch a Miniſter!

The great Duty of every *Miniſter* we have in the firſt Clauſe of the Text, *Take heed unto thy ſelf and unto thy Doctrine.* Take heed how thou liveſt and ordereſt thy Converſation, ſee that it be *Exemplary*: And take heed *how* and *when* thou *teacheſt.* As if the *Apoſtle* had ſaid, "Have a ſpecial Regard to the *Piety* of *thy Life*, and the *Purity* of *thy Doctrine*". And the *Manner* in which the Charge is here given ſuppoſes, and in the ſtrongeſt Manner implies the great Danger every Miniſter is in, of being careleſs both of his *Life* and *Doctrine.* *Take heed*, look about you, be upon your Watch and Guard, as one in his Enemies Country; always in Danger, and knowing not when, nor from what Quarter he ſhall be aſſaulted. And the laſt Clauſe of the Text is the *weighty Argument* to perſuade the Miniſter to be faithful in the Diſcharge of his Duty; *for in doing this, thou ſhalt both ſave thy ſelf and them that hear thee*; thus keeping the Charge thou ſhalt do what in thee lieth to ſave thine own Soul, and the Souls of thoſe to whom thou preacheſt, and among whom thou haſt thy Converſation. This is the plain and full Meaning of the Text. And for Methods ſake, and as what will be proper for our preſent Meditations, and the Solemnity of this Day, I ſhall conſider the Words under theſe three Heads or Propoſitions; which will take in the whole Meaning of them; *viz.*

I. *That it is the great Duty of* every Miniſter *of the Goſpel to maintain a ſteady and ſtrict Regard to his* own Life, *and to the* Doctrine which he preaches.

II. *That he is in* great Danger *of* neglecting both Parts of his Duty, *of being* careleſs *both of his* Life *and* Doctrine.

And then laſtly.

III. *Upon the due Exerciſe of this Care of his* Life *and* Doctrine *depends the* Salvation *of his* own Soul, *and* very much *the* Safety *of the* Souls of his Hearers.

I propoſe (by the divine Help) to touch diſtinctly, tho' very briefly, upon theſe Heads ; the Time will allow me only to be very general. Here then, I am to conſider,

I. *It is the great Duty of every Miniſter of the Goſpel to maintain a ſteady and ſtrict Regard to his* own Life, *and to the* Doctrine which he preaches.

This is a great Part of his Duty as a Chriſtian and as a Miniſter, which God and Man require of and expect from him, and tho' ſummed up in a few Words, is of very large Extent. Here as one great Branch of his Duty,

1. He is obliged to maintain a ſteady Regard to his own *Life* and *Converſation*, to take Heed that *that* be holy, as becomes the Goſpel of Chriſt. *Take Heed to thy Self*: This to be ſure we muſt needs be obliged to in common with the Reſt of Mankind. The ſame Laws of Creation and of Chriſtianity that oblige the Reſt of the World to live well, do lie with equal Weight upon him. The ſame Goſpel or *Grace of God which has appeared unto all Men*, does oblige the Miniſter of it, to *deny Ungodlineſs, and worldly Luſts, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly in the preſent World*. And he has the ſame Encouragement drawn from this World and that which is to come to perſwade him to it. Temporal and eternal Rewards are propounded to him as well as others. It cannot be tho't reaſonable, that he among all Mankind, ſhould be left to live at large, to live a wicked Life, and be *blameleſs*. But it is another and more extenſive View, in which we are to conſider the Obligation lying upon every Miniſter to take Heed to his Converſation that it be holy, even that he may ſet an Example of that univerſal Holineſs and Goodneſs, which thoſe of his Charge ſhould be found in the Practice of. He muſt be religious himſelf, that he may ſet an Example of Religion before his Hearers. This is one of the beſt and moſt effectual Courſes that can be taken by him, pleaſantly, and yet irreſiſtably to allure them into an holy Life. This we may be ſure of when we conſider, one great Part of the Deſign of our bleſſed Saviour's appearing, and continuing in this lower World, was to leave it

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an Example of their Religion, in all the beautiful and important Parts of it, which he came to eſtabliſh in the World, and which Mankind ſhould practice. And we ſee our ſelves what Influence a holy Example ſet by his Followers, has upon Mankind. Example has more Force by far than Precept. The moſt wiſe Laws, yea, the conſummately wiſe Laws of the Goſpel, have not half that Force with them, to oblige Mankind to a Life of Holineſs, as Example; and eſpecially, if the Example be ſet off with the Advantage of Superiority, be ſet by one above us in a higher Station, of a ſuperiour Character. The Example of ſuch a one, has ſuch a commanding Force in it, that it is hard to reſiſt it. And as the Miniſter by his Character and his Pulpit, is exalted above his Brethren, ſo his Example is more conſpicuous, and he may be ſure it will be followed, and the Body of his Hearers will be very like to be as he is, whether he leads a good or a bad Life. A holy Life is a ſtanding Argument for Religion, while a bad Life in the plaineſt Language contradicts it. It is one of *Solomon*'s Proverbs, *They that forſake the Law praiſe the Wicked, but ſuch as keep the Law contend with them.* The Miniſter therefore who deſires to ſee Religion flouriſh among his People, which is the grand Deſign of the Goſpel, and the Miniſtry of it, muſt take Care that his Life in the ſtrongeſt Manner pleads for it; in the Practice of all thoſe ſubſtantial Graces and Virtues of the chriſtian Life, which he in his Preaching urges his Hearers to practice; otherwiſe he will be like to do infinitely more Injury to the Intereſts of Religion, than he can poſſibly do Service to it, by his Preaching. Yea, and ſhould he *ſpeak with the Tongue of Men and Angels*, if he leads a wicked Life, his Preaching, how excellent ſoever, will ſerve rather to harden his Auditors in their Sins than to perſuade them to Repentance, and to make them more and more averſe to a Life of Virtue. And from the vaſt Advantage of an Example of Holineſs ſet by a Miniſter, and the vaſt Diſadvantage of the contrary Example, it is, that we have it given in Charge here by the great Apoſtle to his Son *Timothy*, and ſo plainly inſiſted on in Verſe 12 of this Chapter, *Be thou an Example of the Believers, in Word, in Converſation, in Charity, in Spirit, in Faith, in Purity.* The Miniſter muſt tread over the Path of Life before his Hearers, if ever he expects they ſhould walk in it; and make

Religion

Religion appear with a lovely and beautiful Face by his own Example; be able to call upon them to follow the Example he propounds to them in ſuch Language as that of the great Apoſtle, *Brethren, Be followers together of me, and mark them which walk ſo as ye have us for an Example.* And happy indeed is it when the Miniſters of Chriſt go before theirPeople, and tread out the Steps they are to take towardsHeaven! When they can (without any Upbraidings from their own Conſciences) ſay to their People, *Be ye followers of us, and of ſuch as have us for an Example!* This is the firſt great Branch of the Miniſter's Duty, to *take Heed to himſelf.*

2. As the other great Branch of his Duty, he muſt take Heed to his *Doctrine. Take Heed to thy Self, and unto thy Doctrine.* It is not ſufficient that he maintains a ſteady Regard to his ownLife, and takes Care that it be holy and blameleſs; but he muſt exerciſe a ſtrict Regard to his Preaching: He muſt not only be concerned to live well, but to preach well. And while he thus takes Heed to his Doctrine, he will take Heed that it be ſound and incorrupt. By this I intend not a rigorous and pertinacious Adherence to this or the other Scheme of Religion, which this or the other Sect of Mankind have drawn up, to the infinite Injury of Chriſtianity and true practical Godlineſs; and to which they are pleaſed to fix the Character of ſound Doctrine, and have taken the Liberty to fix the infamous Character of *Hereticks* upon thoſe who cannot but in Reaſon and Conſcience diſſent from them: Were this to be ſound in the Faith, aMan might be ſure never to be ſo; for each Party think they have an equal Right to call themſelves Orthodox, and except a Miniſter ſhould adhere to the ſame Set of Tho'ts which each Party falls into, which muſt needs be impoſſible, he muſt be unſound; but I mean a ſtrict Adherence to the Scriptures, and to theſe ſhould he cloſely and religiouſly adhere. Hence is that ſolemn Charge given, 2 Tim. 1. 13, 14. *Hold faſt the Form of ſound Words. That good Thing which was committed to thee, keep by the Holy Ghoſt which dwelleth in us.* This Form of ſound Words, and this good Thing, which *Timothy* has ſuch a ſolemn Charge to keep, are both one, and both intend the Doctrine of the Goſpel, and the Truths of it.

Theſe he charges him to hold faſt, and not in the leaſt to ſwerve from, in the Courſe of his Miniſtry; not parting with the Truths of the Goſpel himſelf, nor ſuffering others to adulterate and corrupt them. The Goſpel is the Foundation of Men's Faith, their Practice, their Worſhip, their All. From this alone are Men to draw the Articles of their Faith, their Modes of Worſhip, and their Arguments for a holy Life. This therefore ſhould the Miniſter make the Standard of his Preaching, while his Hearers follow the Example of the noble *Bereans*, and *daily ſearch the Scriptures*, to ſee whether what they deliver be Truth. A Miniſter can never too cloſely adhere to the Goſpel himſelf, nor be too urgent upon his Hearers to adhere to it too. *To the Law, and to the Teſtimony; if they ſpeak not according to this Word, it is becauſe there is no Light in them.* The Want of a more ſtrict Adherence to the Goſpel is the Ground of all thoſe Errors and Hereſies that the World has run into, Miniſters and People in all Ages, and that ſo infeſt the Church at this Day. Two Things (ſays the pious Mr. *Baxter*) have ſet the Church on Fire, and been the Plagues of it above one thouſand Years; firſt, Enlarging our Creed, and making more Fundamentals than ever God made: The ſecond is, compoſing (and ſo impoſing) our Creeds and Confeſſions in our own Words and Phraſes. When Men have learned more Manners and Humility than to accuſe God's Language as too general and obſcure, (as if they could mend it) and have more dread of God and Compaſſion on themſelves than to make thoſe to be Fundamentals or Certainties which God never made ſo: And when they reduce their Confeſſions firſt to their due Extent, and ſecondly to Scripture Phraſe (that Diſſenters may not ſcruple ſubſcribing) then, and (I think) never till then, ſhall the Church have Peace about Doctrinals. And he goes on and adds, It ſeems to me no heinous *Socinian* Motion which *Chillingworth* is blamed for, *viz.* let all Men believe the Scripture, and that only, and endeavour to believe it in the true Senſe, and promiſe this, and require no more of others, and they ſhall find this not only a better, but the only Means to ſuppreſs Hereſy and to reſtore Unity. Thus he. Moreover, this Care that a Miniſter's Doctrine be uncorrupt ſhould be exerciſed not only in Oppoſition to Hereſy, but in Oppoſition to humane Traditions, and Notions

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of his own, that the Truths of the Goſpel be delivered free from any Mixture of his own, as the Truths of the Goſpel. The *Phariſees* were a Set of Preachers notoriouſly guilty here. They pretended a great Zeal for the Law, while by their Traditions and groſs Interpretations of it, they almoſt baniſhed it out of the World. And happy were it for the World if theſe were the only Preachers who in this Reſpect were verily guilty, ſince we have no more Authority to make any Additions to the Goſpel by any Notions of our own, than we have to turn aſide from the Truths of the Goſpel, and preach the groſſeſt and moſt palpable Hereſies. Thus he will take Heed to his Doctrine.

Again, He will take Care that his Preaching be *plain* and *grave*, in Contradiſtinction to Rudeneſs of Speech on the one Hand, and the enticing Words of Man's Wiſdom on the other. The Truths of the Goſpel have ſuch a native Beauty and Majeſty in them, that even in Point of good Manners, they ſhould not be treated with that Rudeneſs and Coarſeneſs of Stile which ſome take the Liberty to treat them. Nor do they ſtand in Need of that antick Dreſs in which ſome are pleaſed to cloath them. Both theſe Extreams ſhould be carefully avoided; and by this Means the Preaching becomes agreeable and intelligible to all the Auditory; not above the Capacity of the meaneſt, nor below the Taſte and Reliſh of the more politt. A good Pattern of this was the great Apoſtle, who tells us in what Stile he preached, 1 Cor. 2. 1, 4. *And I, Brethren, when I came unto you, came not with Excellency of Speech. And my Speech, and my Preaching, was not with the enticing Words of Man's Wiſdom.* He preached gravely and plainly: And all other Study for Words in a Divine, is mean Pedantry. That muſt needs be an empty Diſcourſe indeed which lies moſt in Words.

Again, He will be *ſeaſonable* in his Diſcourſes; prudent in falling upon the moſt proper Seaſons to inſiſt upon theſe and thoſe Truths of the Goſpel: Upon the well timing the Subject, very much depends the Succeſs of Preaching, and it requires no ſmall Degree of miniſterial Prudence. The ſame Truths delivered at one Time, ſhall have little or no Influence upon the Hearer,

while at another Time, they ſhall greatly move and affect him. And in order to be thus ſeaſonable in his Diſcourſes, he will obſerve the Diſpenſations of divine Providence, as well as the Ordinances of the Goſpel; that he may accommodate himſelf to the State and Circumſtances of his Hearers: And a great Part of the Beauty and Excellency of Preaching lies in it. Said the wiſe Preacher, *A Word fitly ſpoken is like Apples of Gold in Pictures of Silver. As an Ear-ring of Gold, and an Ornament of fine Gold, ſo is a wiſe Reprover upon an obedient Ear*: And it is given as Part of the Character of a wiſe Steward, by our bleſſed Lord, *that he gives his Houſhold their Meat in* due Seaſon.

Again, He will take Care to inſiſt on Truths of the *greateſt Importance.* There are the more and the leſs neceſſary Truths, the more and the leſs weighty Matters of the Law, ſuch as mediately and ſuch as nextly reſpect the eternal Welfare of the Souls of Men. The Miniſter therefore who takes Heed to his Doctrine will take Care to inſiſt on thoſe Things which are of the higheſt Concernment. He will not ſpend his Breath and exhauſt the Patience of his Hearers in inſiſting on the Outſide and Circumſtantials of Religion, and paſs by the Things wherein the eternal Safety of his Auditors is concerned. The fundamental Doctrines of Chriſtianity, and the moſt weighty Duties of Practice will he make the Subjects of his Preaching. Faith, Repentance and a good Life, will be the Things which, with the greateſt Urgency, he will preſs upon his Hearers. And then *finally*, as in all this he has to deal with rational Creatures, ſo he will take Care to treat them with *Reaſon* and *Argument*, not with looſe Harrangues and a noiſy Addreſs to Paſſions, tending only to throw his Hearers into Diſtreſs and Terror without any rational Conviction on the Mind and Conſcience. In ſuch Things as theſe ſhould a Miniſter's Care of his Doctrine appear, and upon the bare mentioning of them, ſtand recommended to every Man's Reaſon. And if he thus put the Brethren in Remembrance, he will be a good Miniſter of Jeſus Chriſt, nouriſhed up in the Words of Faith and ſound Doctrine. And having ſaid theſe Things in general, that a Miniſter is to maintain a ſteady Regard to his own Life, and a ſtrict Regard to his Doctrine; I paſs to conſider,

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II. The great Hazzard and Danger there is that he will be defective in this Care. Tho' this Care of himſelf and his Doctrine be upon all Accounts ſo reaſonable, and ſhould be his conſtant Buſineſs and Duty, yet there is no ſmall Danger of his being diverted from it. This the Manner of the Charge ſuppoſes. Why ſuch a ſolemn Charge, where there was no Danger. And as I have conſidered his Duty in the two main Branches of it, ſo would I conſider his Danger, ariſing from the Temptations which he is liable to in common with the Reſt of his fellow Chriſtians, and thoſe which he is more eſpecially expoſed to in his ſacred Office. And in both theſe Reſpects is his Danger exceeding great.

1. He is liable to Temptations in common with his fellow Chriſtians, whereby he is in great Danger of being careleſs of himſelf, of his own Life and Converſation. And what an Army of Temptations is the Chriſtian expoſed to, which endanger his Religion and his Soul? You all know what Danger he is in of being diſcouraged from ſetting forward in the Practice of his Duty, and of being diſheartened in his Progreſs. *Within* there is a depraved Soul, that is for ever averſe to a Life of Holineſs, and always prompting him to the Practice of Vice, and which evermore takes Part with every Temptation from *without* which aſſaults him: And here lies his greateſt Danger. And *without* there is the Devil and the World which ſtill encreaſe his Danger. The grand Adverſary of Souls takes unwearied Pains, and leaves no Arts untried, which by his long Experience, and the long Trade he has drove of tempting, he has found ſucceſsful. His Buſineſs, as the Apoſtle repreſents it to us, is to go about as a *roaring Lion ſeeking whom he may devour*, how he may draw ſilly Souls into Miſery. And altho' Mankind have Power to reſiſt him, and therefore are commanded to do it, yet having a Party within us, and a thoro' Acquaintance with humane Nature, he often gets the Victory. The Chriſtian who deſigns to ſtand faſt in the Faith, muſt wreſtle not only againſt Fleſh and Blood, but againſt *Principalites, againſt Powers, againſt the Rulers of the Darkneſs of this World, and againſt ſpiritual Wickedneſſes in high Places.* And then, the World about him often proves a Snare to him,

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and he neglects his God and his Soul for the Sake of it. If it ſmiles, he then places his Truſt in uncertain Riches, and not in the living God, in them he fixes the Center of his Happineſs, the ſupreme Felicity of his Soul, ſaying to the Gold, *thou art my Hope*, and to the fine Gold, *Thou art my Confidence*. If it frowns, he is ſtill in Danger, he now begins to murmur againſt Providence, at ſuch an unequal Diſtribution of Things, or is tempted to diſbelieve that Providence intermingles itſelf at all with Affairs here below, and then *ſteals, and takes the Name of God in vain*. And thus the Men of this World, being all Factors for the Prince of Darkneſs, are no leſs dangerous, who will not fail by their Examples, yea, and right down Perſuaſions too, to contribute what they can to encreaſe our natural Prejudices againſt Religion, and our Love to Vice. Theſe now are the common Temptations every Chriſtian is expoſed to, and to all theſe is every Miniſter expoſed in common with him. None of theſe but what are Enemies to his Vertue as they are to the Religion of others: The ſame corrupt Heart within him, the ſame Adverſary of Souls to aſſault him, and the ſame World to live in. He is on the ſame Road, and muſt expect to meet with the ſame Difficulties and Hardſhips which attend thoſe on the ſame Journey. If he will live a holy Life, and ſet an Example of it to the World, he will meet with the ſame Oppoſition. And thus he is in Danger of neglecting the firſt Part of his Duty, of not taking Care of himſelf, of his own Life.

2. He is liable to Temptations which are peculiar to him as a *Miniſter*, and thus he is in Danger of not taking Heed to his Doctrine. His Danger is greater here than conſidered as a private Chriſtian. And here, beſide the corrupt Part within, which will be always ready to ſuggeſt to him, *Maſter, Spare thy ſelf*; the grand Enemy of Souls will be ſure to let fly all his Fury at him, above all others. The very Deſign of the Goſpel is to dethrone the Prince of Darkneſs; to overthrow and deſtroy his Kingdom and Government in the World, and to ſet up and eſtabliſh the Kingdom of our bleſſed Lord upon the Ruins of it. And for this End we find the firſt Preaching of the Goſpel was moſt wonderfully ſucceſsful. Hence we have that Account given

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to our Saviour at the Return of the Seventy, Luke 10. 17, 18. *They returned again with Joy, saying, Lord, even the Devils are subject unto us through thy Name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as Lightning fall from Heaven.* And the same fatal Design against the Devil's Interest in the World, has the powerful Preaching of the Gospel now, and therefore as one of the best Pieces of Policy he can use, he is following the Ministers of the Gospel with his Temptations and hellish Suggestions, which shall tend to discourage and dishearten them in their Work, being fully assured that every Thrust he can give them, will at the same Time give a great Wound to Religion, and give the Advantage to his Cause in the World. Our Saviour, the first Preacher of the Gospel to this World, was grievously tempted by the Devil himself, and his Ministers in this may be sure to be as their Lord: And as the Devil himself, so his Agents in this lower World, will do all they can, by Assistance from the Powers of Darkness, to oppose them in the faithful Discharge of their Duty. These as Instruments in the Hands of the Devil, are often suffered, by their Lies and Slanders, and cruel Storms of Persecution which they raise, to discourage them from, and tempt them to neglect their Duty. The Piety of their Lives, and the Purity of their Doctrine, they cannot bear; and therefore they malign, spite, and hate them, and use all their Interest to make others do it too. And then their greatest Danger of all, lies in the cold Entertainment they meet with in their Messages from the Lord, in the little Success of their Labours for the Souls of their Hearers. When Sinners are so far from being reformed by their holy Examples, and converted by their powerful Preaching, that they grow more hardened and impudent in their Vices, and refuse to repent and lead a holy Life: What a heavy Trial is this? How breaking to the Spirits? And what a Temptation to a Minister to sit down discouraged, and to take no more Pains, when all seems to be in vain? With what a moving Pathos is this represented to us by the Prophet *Jeremiah*, Chap. ix. Ver. 2. *Oh that I had in the Wilderness a Lodging-Place of way-faring Men, that I might leave my People and go from them, for they be all Adulterers, an Assembly of treacherous Men.* And then finally, let us to all this join the Difficulty of the Work itself; think over the several important Parts of it,

and

and the Danger will appear greater ſtill, and the Temptations to Unfaithfulneſs yet ſtronger. But that I may dwell no longer on the dark Side, I paſs to conſider in the laſt Place,

III. The great and weighty Argument in the Text, to encourage the Miniſter to the greateſt Care of his own Life, and Fidelity in his preaching; *For in doing this, thou ſhalt both ſave thy ſelf, and them that hear thee.*

How comprehenſive, how infinitely weighty and perſwaſive the Argument? He ſhall ſave his own Soul moſt certainly, and have the moſt comfortable Proſpect of the Salvation of the Souls of his Hearers. Who can deſire greater Encouragement, to perſwade him to exerciſe the greateſt Care, and to make him faithful in all Parts of his Duty. And as the Duty incumbent on him, and the Temptations which oppoſe him, in the Diſcharge of it, have been conſidered in a two-fold Light, ſo ſhall I conſider the Encouragement which is here offered to Care and Fidelity, in a two-fold Light alſo. As,

1. The Safety and Salvation of his own Soul, ſhall moſt certainly be the Reward of his taking heed to himſelf and his Doctrine. His own compleat Happineſs in the future World, ſhall be the End of his conquering the Difficulties which attend the faithful Diſcharge of his Duty. God is pleaſed to propound the great and everlaſting Rewards of the next Life to all Chriſtians in general, as one of the grand Arguments he has to uſe with them, to perſwade them to a Life of Holineſs. Eternal Life, which is the Happineſs propounded in the Goſpel, is promiſed in ſuch plain Terms as thoſe, *To them, who by patient continuing in Ways of well-doing, ſeek for Glory, and Honour, and Immortality, eternal Life.* And this is the great Support and Encouragement to him, under all the Trials, Self-denial, and all thoſe Hardſhips he meets with, even his Reſpect to this Recompence of Reward, which he is ſure of from the gracious Promiſes of him who is faithful and true, and cannot deceive, any more than be deceived. And this ſame Promiſe is made to every faithful Miniſter, for his great Comfort and Support: He has the ſame Happineſs

Happineſs in View before him, and the ſame Promiſe to build his Faith, and full Aſſurance of it, upon. When the chief Shepherd ſhall appear, to encourage him to keep the Charge, he ſhall then receive a Crown of Glory which fadeth not away. Not to mention the diſtinguiſhing Reward that will moſt certainly be his Crown, the high Seat in Bliſs and Happineſs, which he will be exalted to. And has not this Conſideration Weight eno' in it, to perſwade a Miniſter to be faithful, yea, chearful in his Duty, whatever Diſcouragements, for the preſent, he might meet with; yea, ſhould he, in the preſent World, receive no Reward at all? Indeed we cannot now tell the Weight of the Crown of Glory; it does not yet appear; and ſo we cannot tell the Weight of the Argument: But we know by thoſe bright Characters God is pleaſed to give us of it, joined with the Duration of it, that it will infinitely out-weigh all that can poſſibly be done and ſuffered in this World for the ſake of it. Who would not be faithful in the Diſcharge of his Duty, when Heaven, with all its Joys, and diſtinguiſhing Glories, is ſet before him as his ſure Reward? And then further,

2. Such a Miniſter has the moſt rational Proſpect of the Salvation of the Souls of his Hearers. Indeed the Certainty of this is not equal to the Certainty of the Salvation of his own Soul. For after all his Care, Conſcience, and Fidelity, he may be unſucceſsful. "It would be an awful Charge indeed (ſays one) was this "given to us, *Reconcile my People to me, or I will never be reconciled "to you.*" Endeavour is our Part, but Succeſs belongs to God. After all the Care and Pains of a Miniſter, his People may grow more blind and hardened in their Vices. The Prophet *Iſaiah*, as well accompliſh'd as he was, ſighs out a ſorrowful Lamentation to God, in ſuch Strains as that, *Who hath believed our Report; and to whom hath the Arm of the Lord been revealed*: But ſtill, tho' he cannot be ſure of Succeſs, and the Salvation of the Souls of his Hearers; yet, upon his Fidelity, upon his ſetting a bright Example of Religion before them, and upon his urging the Practice of it in the moſt powerful Manner upon them; he has the moſt hopeful Proſpect of it. As he has the Care of precious Souls, which muſt be eternally ſaved or loſt, ſo it is likely that the one or the other will be the Conſequence, as he is either faithful or ſlack or remiſs in inſtructing, exhorting, and warning them, as the Word of God di-

rects. God will be like to act as conſiſtently in the Kingdom of Grace, as he does in the Kingdom of Nature; where *Men do not gather Grapes of Thorns, nor Figs of Thiſtles*; where the moſt likely Means are moſt likely to procure the Bleſſing. And thus the Converſion and Salvation of Sinners is moſt likely to follow upon a Miniſter's taking heed to himſelf and to his Doctrine. And will this Argument, even the Proſpect he has of the Salvation of the Souls of his Hearers, be of no Weight with him? Has he no Bowels of Pity and Compaſſion in him, working towards his Fellow-Chriſtians, towards Men in a State of Miſery, and making Haſte to Deſtruction? If he has; next to his own Soul, he will be concerned for the Salvation of the Souls of his Hearers: He will, with the Angels in Heaven, rejoice at the Salvation of Sinners, and thence be excited to do his utmoſt to promote it both by his Life and Doctrine: Thus ſhall he ſave himſelf and them that hear him.

And thus, as the Time would allow me, I have, in general, touched upon the ſeveral Parts of the Text. What remains now is to make ſome plain and practical Reflections briefly upon what has been ſaid. And,

1. We ſee that the Work of the Miniſtry is no eaſy Employment; and what Ignorance and Raſhneſs ſuch are chargeable with, who ruſh into it without due Preparation and ſerious Thought, which tends to nothing but to bring the Word of God into the greateſt Contempt, inſtead of preaching it. And that Man muſt wilfully cloſe his Eyes who does not ſee this to be the Fault and falſe Judgment of many, at this Day, as it was in the Times of the pious Mr. *Baxter*, when he tells us, that "every ignorant Fellow, whoſe Tongue had catch'd a Lax, run up into the Pulpit "to eaſe himſelf; and every one had Leave to diſgorge himſelf in "the holy Aſſemblies that had got a Surfeit of Pride and Self-conceit: Men ſpeak publickly in the Name of Chriſt, that cannot ſpeak Senſe, to the Shame of our Profeſſion, and turn "Preachers as the River *Nilus* breeds Frogs, (ſaith *Herodotus*) when "one Half moveth before the other is made, and while it is but "plain Mud." But who can ſufficiently wonder at ſuch Ignorance and Impudence, who conſiders the double Care lying upon the Miniſters of the Goſpel, a Care of their own Souls, and a Care of the Souls of their Hearers too. Every private Chriſtian finds it hard & difficult eno' to conquer the Temptations & Difficulties

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that attend him in the Way of Salvation, when by Office he has the Safety of his own Soul to contend for only. And can it be tho't an eaſy Thing for the Miniſter to conquer all theſe Temptations, and all thoſe too which are peculiar to him under his ſacred Character, and be ſteady and faithful in the Care of himſelf and his Hearers. After all, behold here, the groſs Ignorance of all ſuch who have light Tho'ts of the Work of the Miniſtry, and the Raſhneſs and Impudence of all ſuch as without ſerious Tho't and due Preparation ruſh into it, and when they have ſcarce Underſtanding eno' to direct themſelves in the plain Way to Happineſs, will undertake to direct and to guide Others in the Way to it. What is like to be the awful Conſequence of this, our bleſſed Lord has told us, is, *The Blind lead the Blind, both will fall into the Ditch*, both are like to fall into Miſery, ſuch a Preacher and his Hearers.

2. How much do the Miniſters of Chriſt ſtand in need of Help from him to enable them to be faithful, & how conſtant ſhould they be in their Applications to him for it. A common Chriſtian can do nothing to any Purpoſe in Religion, without the Spirit and the Grace of Chriſt; being left to himſelf, he would ſoon fall off from his Profeſſion, and fall an eaſy Prey into the Hands of his ſpiritual Enemies. *Without me*, ſaid our Saviour to his Diſciples, *ye can do nothing*. And this makes it reaſonable that every ſuch Chriſtian ſhould have his conſtant Dependance upon the Spirit and Grace of Chriſt, and be unwearied in his Applications to the Throne of Grace for it. And as the Difficulties are more and greater which attend the Miniſter, he muſt more eſpecially and emphatically ſtand in need of Help from above. His Temptations are peculiar, and ſuch muſt his Aſſiſtance be, or he will never do his Duty and be faithful. Under a deep Senſe of the Greatneſs of the Work, and of his Weakneſs alone to diſcharge it, how does the great Apoſtle cry out, *Who is ſufficient for theſe Things?* Verily no Man, no Angel, without Help from God. And this ſhould be a powerful Argument with the Miniſter, to perſwade him to be inceſſant in his Aplications to Heaven for it. God is ready to help his Miniſters, but they muſt ſeek to him for it, or be ſure never to obtain it. The Work and the Difficulties which attend it are peculiar, and this makes him ſtand in ſuch eminent Need of divine Aſſiſtance, and this ſhould make him pray for it without ceaſing.

3. How melancholly the Sight, and how dreadful the Conſequences of it, to ſee a Miniſter careleſs of his own Soul, and of the Souls of his Hearers! And it is a Caſe more than to be ſuppoſed, that after all the Obligations lying upon a Miniſter to take Care of his own Soul and the Souls of his Hearers, that he may be negligent and careleſs; live a wicked Life himſelf, and take no Care (to any Purpoſe) of his Charge. Said the great Apoſtle, *I keep under my Body, and bring it into Subjection, leſt while I preach to others, I myſelf ſhould be a Caſt-away.* But how ſhocking the Sight! And how dreadful are the Conſequences of ſuch Negligence like to be! By his wicked Example what Multitudes will be encouraged and hardened in their Vices, and be like to fall into Miſery! And then as to *himſelf* the Conſequences are like to be more dreadful ſtill; for as his Charge is double, ſuch will his Damnation be alſo, if he remains falſe to it. No Man's Miſery can with Reaſon and Juſtice be tho't ſo great as his, who has the Care of his own Soul, and the Care of others too, and yet proves falſe to his Truſt, yea, nor the Miſery of the Devils neither, for when Satan deſtroys the Souls of Men (ſays Mr. *Burkit*) he ſhall anſwer for it as a Murderer only, not as an Officer who was entruſted with the Care of Souls; but if the Steward do not provide, if the Shepherd do not feed, if the Watchman do not warn, they ſhall anſwer not only for the Souls that have miſcarried, but for an Office neglected, for a Talent hidden, and for a Stewardſhip unfaithfully adminiſtred. And he goes on, Wo unto us if at the great Day we hear diſtreſſed Souls roaring out their Complaints and doleful Accuſations againſt us, Lord, our Stewards have defrauded us, our Watchmen have betrayed us, our Guides have miſled us.

4. How reaſonable is it that the People ſhould take Care of their own Souls. There is a double Care lying upon Miniſters, a Care of their own Souls, and a Care of the Souls of their Hearers, and all for their Hearer's Sake. And does not this in the ſtrongeſt Manner infer an Obligation upon the People to be concerned for themſelves, to take Care of their own Souls. Shall Miniſters take all the Care, and they take none themſelves; if not, after all they muſt and will periſh. Miniſters watch for *their* Souls, *as thoſe that muſt give an Account*, but except they can be perſuaded to take Care of their Souls themſelves, they muſt do

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it with Grief and not with Joy, which will be very unprofitable for them. And then laſtly,

5. What an Encouragement is here to Fidelity in the Care of a Miniſter's own Soul, and of the Souls of his Hearers. The Work indeed is great and the Difficulties many, and great is the Reward too, if he is faithful he is ſure of ſaving his own Soul, and has a fair Proſpect of ſaving the Souls of his Hearers. And had we but an Eye of Faith to look forward beyond this World, to Things Inviſible, the Weighty Argument before us might not only Invite thoſe into the Miniſtry who are turning aſide from it, by reaſon of the preſent Difficulties which attend it, but Encourage thoſe who have entred upon it to be both Faithful and Chearful in the Diſcharge of it.

And here,

Will my *Reverend Fathers and Brethren* preſent in the Miniſtry ſuffer me, this Day, with all Humility to ſtir up their pure Minds by way of Remembrance, in the Language of our Text, *to take heed to themſelves and to their Doctrine.* And if I miſtake not, there never was a Time when ſuch an Addreſs was more Neceſſary or Seaſonable; for we are fallen into an Age, when adding to the common Difficulties and Diſcouragements, which attend the Miniſtry, and which alone are Weighty eno': We have thoſe to contend with which are Peculiar and Extraordinary, occaſioned by the late Appearance of a Wandring, Ignorant and *Enthuſiaſtick* ſet of Preachers among us, whoſe Deſign ſeems evidently to ſubvert the ſtanding Miniſtry of the Country, and to infuſe and raiſe Jealouſies and Suſpicions in the Minds of People, and Prejudies againſt it. How are we repreſented as *Unconverted*, *Strangers to the Power of Godlineſs*, *Wolves in Sheeps Cloathing*, and in the broad Road to Deſtruction our ſelves, and leading others by Thouſands into Deſtruction too. And by theſe falſe Crys and Slanders, the Spirit of Jealouſy is come upon the People, of their Miniſters, and a diſpoſition in them to join in the Cries againſt them, and to turn Wanderers after Strangers, to the neglecting and deſpiſing their own Faithful Paſtors, when for a long Time, they have fully known their Doctrine, manner of Life, Purpoſe, Faith, Long-ſuffering, Charity, Patience. Theſe thiugs are great Diſcouragements to the faithful Miniſters of Chriſt, and had they not a Compaſſionate Saviour to look to for Support and Comfort would diſpirit and

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ſink them. This joined with a ſtrong Faith in that great and diſtinguiſhing Reward, which will be their Happineſs, if they notwithſtanding continue Faithful to the Death muſt be their Comfort and Support. Let us then, *My Fathers and Brethren*, be Daily looking unto Jeſus for that Grace which may be ſufficient for us, and as we have little Encouragement drawn from the preſent World, let us by an Eye of Faith, make preſent to our ſelves, the future Glory of thoſe who are *wiſe* to win Souls to Chriſt; who *ſhall ſhine as the brightneſs of the Firmament, and as the Stars forever and ever.* Methinks, the believing Views of this might inſpire us with invincible Courage and Reſolution to encounter the Difficulties which lye in the way of a faithful Diſcharge of our Duty, let them be never ſo many and great. We ſee with what undaunted Courage this Faith inſpired the great Apoſtle. *The Holy Ghoſt*, (ſaith he) *witneſſeth in every City, ſaying, that Bonds and Afflictions abide me; but none of theſe Things move me, nor count I my Life dear to me, that I might finiſh my Courſe with Joy, and the Miniſtry which I have received of the Lord Jeſus, to teſtify the Goſpel of the Grace of God.*

And eſpecially will you (*my dear Brother*) who have requeſted me this Day to be your Monitor, and who are now to be introduced into the ſacred Miniſtry, ſuffer the Word of Exhortation, which ſpeaketh to you in the Text, to *take Heed unto thy Self, and to thy Doctrine.* Be concerned to live well: Tread out the Way of Life before this People, go before them by your own Example, in the Practice of all the ſubſtantial Graces and Virtues of the chriſtian Life. Your People reaſonably expect this from you, and you will find it a conſtant and prevailing Argument with them, to bring them to the Love and Practice of that Holineſs which you deſire ſhould flouriſh among them. And as to your common Conduct, you will always find Prudence of great Importance towards getting and maintaining a due Regard to your Perſon among your People, yea, and towards the Succeſs of your Miniſtry too.

And then as to your *Doctrine*, the preſent Times eſpecially call aloud upon you to take Heed to that, when Errors, tending to deſtroy and ſubvert the whole Deſign of the Goſpel, and the appearing of the Son of God upon this Earth, are ſpreading and prevailing among us. *Antinomianiſm* is breaking in like a Flood among

among us, a Doctrine as dangerous as it is falſe; exceeding agreeable to Men's Luſts and Corruptions, and the natural Inclinations of Mankind, whence they very much like a Religion without Virtue: All Men being by Nature (ſays Mr. *Baxter*) *Antinomians* that is, Enemies to good Works, and like a Doctrine which ſaves Men *in* their Sins but not *from* them, and deſire to go to Heaven with an empty Dependance upon what Chriſt has done, without doing any Thing themſelves. The *important Doctrine* of the *Spirit* is ſo explained and taught, as to take away and deſtroy the Neceſſity of a ſtanding Revelation, and ſo as to open a Door to the endleſs Wilds of *Enthuſiaſm*. The great *Doctrine* of *Converſion* or *Regeneration* is repreſented in ſuch a Manner, conſiſting in great Terrors and Convulſions, ſucceeded by ſudden and rapturous Joys, which the Goſpel knows nothing of; as if to bring a Man to the moſt rational Acts (for ſuch are the Acts of the Soul in Converſion) the Way was to render him capable of no rational Acts at all. Here then ſhould be your ſpecial Guard againſt the Prevalency of ſuch Errors as theſe among your People: And as you will not fail to guard them againſt theſe, and every growing Error, by your Preaching, ſo you will not fail to guard your Pulpit againſt thoſe who lie in wait to deceive, and to ſow the Seeds of Contention and corrupt Doctrine among us.

And, *Sir*, conſidering the Times and Place in which you are now ſettling, you may be ſure to meet with Difficulties eno': God knows how great and how many; moſt certainly with ſuch as will thoro'ly convince you of the Neceſſity of looking beyond this World for Help, that will make it neceſſary for you to look forward to the Encouragement here ſet before you, even the Salvation of your own Soul, and the Souls of them that hear you; and we, this Day, ſincerely wiſh for you all that Help and Grace from Chriſt that is neceſſary to your ſeeing and enjoying this Happineſs.

I would now turn myſelf to the little Flock of Chriſt in this Place. *Dearly Beloved*, We this Day, with one Heart & Voice, unite with you in giving Thanks to the gracious Head of the Church [illegible] now inclined and united your Hearts in ſeeking [illegible] and the Ordinances of it among you, [illegible] calling this our dear Brother to [illegible] in the Lord. Accept him then

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as a precious Gift of our aſcended Lord and Saviour to you, and be concerned to expreſs your Gratitude to our Saviour, by a concern to profit by his Miniſtry. Don't diſcourage him in it by any Means, eſpecially by oppoſing him in it, or by taking the Work, in a diſorderly Manner, out of his Hands, or by running after Strangers, and ſo ſlight and deſpiſe him, by forſaking his faithful Miniſtry among you, as the Manner of ſome is. Guard againſt every Thing that may tend to throw you into Contentions, which are too common in new Settlements: Your Unity muſt be your Strength. May the Fears of a War without make you afraid of Jarrs within. And we this Day wiſh for you the Protection of divine Providence, and the Smiles of Heaven upon you in outward Regards; but above all, that your Souls may be in Health and proſper; and in order to this, be pleaſed to remember, this Day begins a Time of Probation with you, and ſuch as your Improvement of it is, ſuch will your Account be at laſt. And may you have Grace ſo to improve it, as that both you and your Miniſter in the Day of Chriſt may appear at *his* right Hand, and he there preſent you before the Throne, faultleſs and blameleſs in ſuch Language as that, *Here am I, and the Children thou haſt graciouſly given me.*

To conclude,

May this whole Aſſembly be perſwaded into a ſerious Concern for their own Salvation. It is the Buſineſs and Duty, you ſee, of your Miniſters to be concerned for it, and will not you be concerned for it your ſelves: Notwithſtanding all *their* Care, you never will ſecure it except you are careful too. May you all this Day, leave the Houſe of God with fixed Reſolutions (by his Help) that all the Care of God and his Miniſters ſhall not be loſt upon you: And may you be preſerved this Day from thoſe Sins and Extravagances which many upon ſuch Solemnities run into to the Scandal of Chriſtianity. And may we all, both Miniſters and People, ſo behave our ſelves this Day, and while we live, in our reſpective Places, ſo improve our Talents, as that when our Lord ſhall call us before him (as in a little while he will [illegible] up our Account, we may be able to do it [illegible] Grief, and have the joyful Sentence pro[illegible] *my Father, inherit the Kingdom* [illegible] *tion of the World.* AMEN.